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# Synthesis and Melody: Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in Eb for Violin and Viola

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SYNTHESIS AND MELODY: MOZART'S SINFONIA CONCERTANTE IN Eb FOR  
VIOLIN AND VIOLA

by

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B.A., Hillsdale College, 2013

A Research Paper

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

JENNIFER FRANKLUND, for the MUSIC BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH CLASS,  
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TITLE: SYNTHESIS AND MELODY: MOZART'S SINFONIA CONCERTANTE IN Eb FOR  
VIOLIN AND VIOLA

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. DOUGLAS WORTHEN

Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in Eb Major for Violin, Viola, and Orchestra (K.364), represents the pinnacle of Mozart's travels through Mannheim and Paris. It combines elements from the Mannheim school, Salzburg tradition, and Parisian the symphonie concertante genre. Through a semiotic analysis of the first movement of the work, it is possible to find specific examples of influences from these three elements.

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## CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1777, Wolfgang Mozart was unhappy. He had been working under the rule of the new archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymous Colloredo, since 1773, and he felt suppressed and underappreciated. By the summer of 1777, Mozart had had enough. He petitioned Colloredo for a release from his employment in order to travel to France to look for a job, which unfortunately led to a summary firing of both Wolfgang and Leopold. Mozart's job hunt now carried the weight of his entire family's welfare, and he set out for Munich, Mannheim, and Paris in the company of his mother to land an excellent job and expand his musical horizons. Wolfgang was no longer a charming child prodigy however, and finding a job proved more difficult than expected. By 1779, Mozart was forced to return to Salzburg and work for Colloredo. His journey, though perhaps not as financially advantageous as could be wished, introduced Mozart to many new musical ideas, which later blossomed into great masterworks. In Mannheim, he heard the famous court orchestra and absorbed their techniques. In Paris, he discovered the symphonie concertante, a genre for multiple soloists and orchestra.

Sadly, Mozart's trip to Mannheim and Paris to find work was a dismal failure, forcing him to return to Salzburg to beg for a job from the heinous Colloredo. Not only this, but his beloved mother Anna Maria died in Paris in 1778 after an illness of just a few months. And on the way back from Paris, Mozart stopped in Munich to visit the Webers, particularly their second daughter Aloysia, with whom he had fallen in love the previous year in Mannheim. Unfortunately, Aloysia was beginning to come into her own by this time, musically and romantically, and had no more interest in an unemployed former child-prodigy. So it was a defeated and melancholy Mozart who returned to Salzburg, yet the trip was not a total waste. He had heard new musical styles and techniques that he could now put to good use in his own

composition. After his journey ended, he blended characteristics of the symphonie concertante genre with the Mannheim orchestral techniques he had heard during his travels to write the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in Eb Major, K.364.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1770's and 1780's, the symphonie concertante was one of the most popular symphonic forms in Paris. Similar to the Baroque concerto grosso or the classical concerto, the symphonie concertante showcased between two and nine solo players, with an orchestral accompaniment. Unlike the concerto grosso, which usually treats the soloists and the orchestra as equals, the symphonie concertante lets the solo lines do most of the melodic heavy-lifting, relegating the orchestra to cover merely the initial exposition and little else. Barry Brooks suggests that new social structures, namely the growing importance of the middle class, caused the sudden surge of popularity of this new genre. The symphonie concertante "reflected profound social changes: the emergence of bourgeois audiences, the public concert halls, the larger orchestras; musically, it embodied the tastes of these audiences, to wit: an increasing fascination by virtuoso display, a fondness for big sonorities, and particularly, an all-pervading love affair with the pleasing melodic line."<sup>2</sup> As a vehicle for display, the symphonie concertante was superb. Often, local composers would write for themselves or for their friends and perform for middle class audiences, giving themselves a chance to show off outside of the courts of their patrons and make some extra money. Mozart must have felt the appeal of this type of performance strongly, after leaving Salzburg on such bad terms with the archbishop.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the spelling "sinfonia concertante" is merely an Italianization of the French term "symphonie concertante".

<sup>2</sup> Barry S. Brook, "The 'Symphonie Concertante': An Interim Report." *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 47, no. 4 (October, 1961): 497.

Mozart's ventures into the symphonie concertante genre are sadly few. K.364 is the only finished work titled "Concertante" extant.<sup>3</sup> There are fragments of two other attempts: Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola, Cello and Orchestra in A major, K. 320e (Anh. 104), and Sinfonia Concertante for Piano, Violin and Orchestra in D major, K. Anh. 56. There also remains the hotly debated Sinfonia Concertante for Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 297b.<sup>4</sup> Yet Mozart compensates for the lack of quantity with K.364, a work of breathtaking quality. In it, he embodies the best techniques of the Mannheim school with a full-bodied orchestration that supports two virtuoso solo lines of great melodic depth and character. The genre of the symphonie concertante is perfectly suited to showcase Mozart's grasp of the Mannheim school as well as his melodic genius.

#### K.364: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

The three-movement structure of the Sinfonia Concertante is unusual, to say the least. Brook reports that over half of the French sinfonie concertantes were in two movements and compositions in a minor key were extremely rare.<sup>5</sup> That K.364 contains a middle movement in a minor key immediately stands out. Additionally, of Mozart's five extant symphonie concertantes, K.364 is the only one with a doubled viola section. The other three have more traditional orchestration: two violin sections, a viola section, and a cello/bass section. The doubled viola section creates a rich tonal cushion for the melodic pyrotechnics of the two solo instruments. The

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<sup>3</sup> Although the Flute and Harp Concerto in C, K.299, does not bear the appellation of "Sinfonia Concertante", it has two solo instruments that present a profusion of melody, the hallmarks of this genre. For information about this work, please see: Michael Thomas Roeder. *A History of the Concerto* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Its legitimacy is dubious. See Robert D. Levin. *Who Wrote the Mozart Four-Wind Concertante?* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Brook, "The 'Symphonie Concertante': An Interim Report," 503.



viola soloist plays scordatura, tuning all the strings up a half step. The principle viola part is then written in D major. There are two possible reasons for this change. First, tuning higher creates a brighter sound to match the brightness of the principle violinist and allows the viola player to use more resonant notes on the open strings. Second, the part is much easier to play in D major. At the time of its composition, viola technique was not as advanced as violin technique, so it was reasonable to somewhat simplify a viola part, especially since Mozart was just beginning to pick up the viola himself.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that he was even writing K.364 for his father on violin and himself on the viola. No information about the premier of the piece has yet surfaced. The autograph has also been lost; all that remains are Mozart's handwritten cadenzas for the first movement.

#### A MELODIC AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT

Even a cursory glance at the first movement of the piece reveals an abundance of melodic material, a hallmark of the symphonie concertante. Since these works were written to showcase the talent of local musicians for the purpose of entertaining the middle classes, composers would squeeze in as many crowd-pleasing melodies as they could into one piece, providing ample material to demonstrate the solo performers' musical agility and charm the audience. It makes sense therefore to use a semiotic method to analyze the piece, since that most clearly demonstrates the variety and order of the melodies used. My analysis (figure 6) displays each theme, instrumentation (one soloist, both soloists, or tutti), and key area of the first movement.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> J. Arthur Watson. "Mozart and the Viola." *Music & Letters* 22, No. 1 (January, 1941), 44.

<sup>7</sup> My analysis technique is based on the technique demonstrated by Dr. Douglas Worthen "A Semiotic View of the Flute Concerto Genre from Vivaldi to Mozart." DMA diss, The Hartt School, University of Hartford, 2007.

Sinfonia Concertante in Eb for Violin and Viola. K.364

Mozart  
Sinfonia Concertante in Eb  
for Violin and Viola  
K. 364

**Allegro maestoso.**

**Oboi.** *trutti*

**Corni in Es.**

**Violino principale.**

**Viola principale.**  
*(accordati un mezzo tono più alto.)*

**Violino I.**

**Violino II.**

**Viola I.**

**Viola II.**

**Violoncello.**

**Contrabasso.**

Figure 1. Doubled viola section and scordatura in solo viola

By this method, it is easy to discuss the separate melodies, their possible origins, and how they interact. In the chart, the white represents tutti sections, the blue represents the violin solos, the green represents the viola solos, and the purple represents when the soloists play together. A superscript “x” represents a sign that has been extended, and a superscript “s” represents a sign that has been shortened. Some signs have two variations, which are represented by a superscript “1” for the second variation. Also shown on the left is the broad large scale form of the work, in ritornello form. The marking “Allegro maestoso” occurs rarely in Mozart’s work; when it does appear, it marks a piece of particular grandeur and importance.<sup>8</sup> The piece opens with a tonic fanfare (sign A).



Figure 2. Sign A

This fanfare was a hallmark of the Mannheim style; Karl Stamitz’s *Symphony in F*, Op.9 No.4 opens in the exact same way.<sup>9</sup> The gesture lends the first movement dignity and grace and also serves as a marker for direction change later in the movement. It occurs in shortened form to punctuate the first few measures of the soloists entrance, as well as signaling a return to earlier themes in measure 223. This gesture also signals the presence of the galant style, which occurs

<sup>8</sup> A. Hyatt. King, *Mozart Wind and String Concertos*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978), 48.

<sup>9</sup> A. Hyatt. King, *Mozart Wind and String Concertos*, 50.

throughout the movement in various forms. The dotted eighth note plus sixteenth note rhythm is, after all, just the opening gesture of the movement in double time, and this rhythm appears throughout the movement (e.g. mm. 27-29, 58-61, and 158-164). This galant style appears only in the tutti; Mozart reserves the more lyrical and virtuosic melodies for the soloists.

The fingerprints of the Mannheim school can be found in many places of this movement. Some of the most recognizable symphonic features of the Mannheim school appear in the first exposition, before the soloists enter. In measures 46-57 (sign G), Mozart uses a Mannheim rocket and orchestral trills to propel the music to the end of the tutti exposition. This is not merely an exciting gesture, however. Mozart uses the two beat trill motive melodically in the very next theme, manipulating the conventions of the Mannheim school to produce even more melodic material.



Figure 3. Trill motive as Mannheim roller and trill motive as melody

The Mannheim sigh also makes an appearance in the first tutti section. The melody in mm. 16-19 and 24-27 displays this technique.



Figure 4. Mannheim sigh in bar 17

Mannheim is not the only musically important location represented in this movement, however.

A typical Salzburg theme makes an appearance in the horn call in mm. 38-39.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 5. Salzburg horn call

The long melodies and virtuosic fantasy passages in the solo instruments are characteristic of the true Parisian symphonie concertante style.

Though the hallmark of the Parisian symphonie concertante was melodic invention, and though Mozart himself was extremely adept at the creation of beautiful new melodies, the many signs in this piece are not as unrelated as they may seem at first glance. Mozart often reuses accompaniment from one melody to another to link the two together. For example, the short, descending violin eighth notes that begin sign B also accompany sign U, this time in the viola and cello, creating a neat symmetry between the beginning and end of the large section. The horn call previously shown is actually prefigured by an oboe call in measure 14. In sign F, the eighth notes (sign B) combine with the horn call (sign C) to create a trope, a juxtaposition of two

<sup>10</sup> Michael Thomas Roeder, *A History of the Concerto*, (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994), 148.

previously separate signs. Such careful work shows both Mozart's genius and also gives an elegant example of the different cultural signs that blend in this work.

### CONCLUSION

There is still much work to do in studying K.364. The middle movement, a stately andante, is unusual in the symphonie concertante repertoire, both because of its slow tempo and minor key. A careful analysis may reveal the influences of Mannheim and Paris, but it could also reveal themes entirely outside these traditions. It would also be beneficial to compare the Sinfonia Concertante with other Parisian works for the same two soloists, to find similarities and differences. The last movement, a Rondo, seems to fit with the traditional symphonie concertante plan, which ends in a rondo, but perhaps there is more than meets the eye. As an example of the pinnacle of symphonie concertante genre, K.364 is a masterpiece, but it is more than that. In it, Mozart integrated different cultural signs he gleaned from his trip to Mannheim and Paris, and produced a lyric, virtuosic, and complex masterpiece.

Exposition	Eb	A <sub>3</sub>	B <sub>3</sub> C <sub>11</sub> D <sub>2</sub> E <sub>13</sub> F <sub>28</sub> G <sub>46</sub> H <sub>58</sub> I <sub>62</sub>
Ritornello 1		A <sup>e</sup> <sub>29</sub>	*J <sub>70</sub>
			K <sub>79</sub>
		A <sup>e</sup> <sub>42</sub>	K <sup>x</sup> <sub>83</sub>
	Cm		L <sub>61</sub> *M <sub>92</sub>
Ritornello 2	Eb		M <sup>x</sup> <sub>98</sub>
			N <sub>103</sub>
			N <sub>106</sub>
			N <sup>i</sup> <sub>107</sub>
			N <sub>113</sub>
			N <sub>114</sub>
TarLasia			N <sup>i*</sup> <sub>115</sub>
			*O <sub>125</sub>
			O <sub>130</sub>
			P <sub>133</sub>
			P <sup>x</sup> <sub>135</sub>
			Q <sub>143</sub>
Cm			R <sub>155</sub>
			I <sub>165</sub>
			I <sub>181</sub>
			S <sub>174</sub>
			S <sub>187</sub>
			T <sub>194</sub> U <sub>210</sub>
Ritornello 1	Eb	A <sub>221</sub>	*J <sub>229</sub>
		A <sup>x</sup> <sub>237</sub>	
		A <sup>e</sup> <sub>241</sub>	K <sub>238</sub>

Figure 6a. A Semiotic Analysis of the Allegro Maestoso, K.364

		K <sup>x</sup> <sub>242</sub>	
		L <sub>215</sub>	
		*M <sup>x</sup> <sub>251</sub>	
<b>Gm</b>		M <sup>x</sup> <sub>257</sub>	
Ritornello 2		N <sub>251</sub>	
		N <sub>265</sub>	
		N <sup>1</sup> <sub>266</sub>	
		N <sub>272</sub>	
		N <sub>273</sub>	
		N <sup>1x</sup> <sub>274</sub>	
		*O <sup>x</sup> <sub>284</sub>	
		O <sub>289</sub>	
FarLasia		F <sub>293</sub>	
		V <sub>301</sub>	
		V <sup>x</sup> <sub>306</sub>	
		W <sub>314</sub>	
		X <sub>322</sub>	
Coda			
		I <sup>x</sup> <sub>330</sub>	

Figure 6b. A Semiotic Analysis of the Allegro Maestoso, K.364, cont.



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